

Whatcom County Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

June 17, 2019

Attendees

Eileen Kadesh, Chair

Sunny Beaver

Stephen Zylstra

Sonja Max

Patrick Alesse

Mark Owings

Jason Ardt - County Public Works

Christ Thomsen - County Parks

Absent

Alan McConchie; Matt Paskus; Gary Malick; Tara Satushek; Kyle Morris

Call to order

Eileen convened the meeting at 5:30 PM. She welcomed members and guests and noted that Patrick Alesse passed around copies of a Birch Bay recreational map provided by the C Shop.

Introductions

Eileen introduced Sonja Max again, to members who had not met her at the prior meeting.

Approval of minutes

Stephen Zylstra moved the May minutes be accepted as written. Second by Sunny Beaver. Unanimous approval by voice vote.

Report on Bike To Work Day Station

Deemed a success.

The station was staffed by Eileen, Stephen, and Sunny. Started out a bit rainy but turned to nice weather.

About 100 cyclists stopped by -- about the same as last year.

Sunny said it was good to have the banner.

Patrick mentioned it would be good to remind employers about offering facilities to cycle commuters.

Stephen asked - have we ever checked with the community to see what they would desire for our Bike To Work Day station?

Report on meeting with Jack Louws

Eileen and Gary met with Jack Louws a few weeks ago. They reviewed the top Committee priorities for him and updated him on the projects for the coming year.

Upcoming Nooksack Trail Connections Tour

Eileen contacted Nicole Oliver, Bellingham Parks Development Manager, regarding the Lockwood property and asked about city plans for the property. She was told the city plans a trail through the property but does not have funding now.

Eileen and Gary met with Maggi Kriger, Bellingham Parks and Recreation Advisory Board member, and Daniel Tepper to discuss the upcoming tour. Eileen decided to focus just on the airport trail portion of the Nooksack Loop Trail.

The tour is set for July 2 from 2-5 PM. Among those planning to attend are:

Eileen

Sonja

Jon Hutchings

Nicole Oliver, Development Manager, City of Bellingham Parks Dept.

Jon Mutchler, Mayor of Ferndale

Councilmember Carol Frazey

Michael Shepard, Port Commissioner

Councilmember Todd Donovan

Sonja is assisting and will provide maps and briefing materials.

The idea is to have the attendees walk the Lockwood property and the Airport Trail and to explore how the county, city, and port can all work together to make this connector a reality.

Jason will drive the county van (this limits the number who can attend and ride along).

The Port has offered to do a tour of their section, with a limit of 25 people.

The Greenway Committee and Nicole Oliver met Monday at the Lockwood property to look at wetlands issues regarding the trail. It looked good (dry). The challenge will be connecting to the trail on the south side of Marine Drive.

Stephen asked about the objectives of the tour. Eileen responded that the main objective is to figure out the roles of the County, City, and Port and to find out what is needed from each of these entities. Also, hopefully attendees will see firsthand the value of having a connector trail allowing travel between Ferndale and Bellingham.

County Council Briefing

Eileen has scheduled a briefing of council members by this committee August 7 at 1:30 PM in Council Chambers at the County Courthouse. Will brief members about this committee's work:

- Will talk about the Nooksack Loop Trail section from Bellingham to Ferndale.

- Will review the Airport Trail and Marine Drive.

- Will review the Blaine/Birch Bay Trail.

- Will review the Kendall Connectivity Trail.

- Will discuss the concept of small projects/grants.

Update on Spot Improvements

Eileen is continuing discussions with Jason about the following:

- 1) NorthShore Drive improvements - Jason says we need to make progress with Public Works and it would help if we make a list of low cost spot improvement projects.

- 2) Nooksack Valley High School project. Jason says we need to get the school district on board with this one. If the school district supports it, good. If not, then there may not be a project.

Signage would be a low-cost option, but would putting in signage set a precedent? Would there be liability issues?

Sonja asked about the background on this project. Jason summarized and indicated the discussion began when he was approached by a Sheriff Deputy concerned about the foot traffic crossing the road to the school during drop-off times. Jason remains unsure of the potential impact of this project and is still unsure if it's really needed. He will follow up at the next meeting.

Pedestrian-Bicycle Plan Update

Stephen is working on investigating three things:

- 1) Economic benefits of pedestrian/bicycle facilities.
- 2) How do other counties do off-road trails?

He has talked with Skagit, Pierce, Snohomish, and King Counties. Will talk with Clark County soon. All have trails; King County has more than 300 miles of trails. They support trail use for transportation, as well as recreation. Most of the funding for the trails is via grants, but also some from county budgets. King County formed a regional coalition of counties to work together. King and Pierce Counties have trail coordinators; this helps with implementation. The County Councils are supportive of the trail systems, but funding is an issue, as there are lots of competing needs. These counties recommend participating in the State Trails Coalition.

- 3) Safe Routes to School program

Is Whatcom County involved? Number of projects currently underway:

Whatcom - none

Bellingham - 2

Snohomish County - 5

Bellingham has used SRTS money in the Cordata area on Aldrich Road to Cordata Elementary.

Bellingham has a process in place already; this helps since the process is pretty onerous. Eileen asked Stephen to contact a couple of school districts in Whatcom County to see if they have a Safe Routes to School plan.

Eileen also mentioned we should reference this in our updated plan.

Stephen plans to follow up with Snohomish County to see what makes them function at such a higher level.

Sunny asked about funding: Do any of these counties have a levy for trails? Answer: yes, King County does, but it will expire this year.

Sonja suggested contacting Okanogan County to see how things work there.

Christ suggested contacting counties that have a population similar to that of Whatcom County.

Finally, Stephen opined that it might be good to develop a vision and to also focus on social justice issues.

Miscellaneous Items

Eileen had attended a hearing on the ADA contract for Public Works. Several disabled citizens spoke at the hearing. One mentioned the importance of wayfinding signage. One suggested that, for HAWK crossings, the pedestrians might benefit from better signage. Jason reminded us that the HAWK crossings have to comply with a national standard; he also explained the differences between the HAWK crossings and the older, flashing yellow light crossings.

The City of Bellingham has hired the same consultants as the County to study the contract; next week the City will put on a presentation about upcoming ADA improvements.

Eileen reminded everyone about the Bike/Walk Bellingham Picnic invitation for next Thursday.

The subject of chip seal roads in Pt. Roberts was brought up. Jason talked briefly about Pt. Roberts; this summer the county is chip sealing a number of the roads there. There have been complaints/questions about the impact on cycling and skating of the chip seal process. Jason indicated the shoulders will not be chip sealed - just the traffic lanes, so hopefully impact will be minimal. There ensued a brief discussion of chip seal vs asphalt and effect on cyclists. Jason reviewed the value of the chip seal process in extending road life and said that it costs about 10% of what asphalt paving costs (\$35k per mile vs \$350k per mile!).

Jason brought up a possible bike route from Lynden to Everson. Current Whatcom County bike routes are Hannegan and Birch Bay/Lynden Road. The idea is to add Lynden to Everson on Hampton and Van Buren Roads. He reviewed what is involved in making roads into bike routes: signage, a larger edge stripe, and more frequent sweeping. Jason had talked with County engineers about a possible route on the above -mentioned roads and got a positive response.

Sonja commented on the vehicle speed on the bike routes (as high as 50 mph) and asked if there is data on Hannegan usage by cyclists. Jason didn't think that information is available and also did not have a sense of whether there was any greater accident rate on the bike routes as opposed to slower, nearby roads. Jason then explained the difference between bike routes and bike lanes.

There then ensued a discussion of possible ways to protect cyclists from passing traffic, and Jason was questioned about various options, including "turtles."

Eileen asked if there were any federal guidelines and Jason replied that the guidelines apply to signage only.

Jason indicated the potential new route has lots less traffic than our other two routes.

Sonja mentioned that maybe we could look into a Vision Zero plan in the future.

Eileen wondered if we might look at reducing speed limits on bike routes. Eileen and Jason discussed wayfinding signage on bike routes.

Jason will look into the possible use of "turtles" to protect cyclists and will report back to the committee.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 6:35 PM.